

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 SCCT-01 DHA-02 IO-10

EB-07 SCA-01 OC-05 CCO-00 /082 W

----- 074753

O R 311437Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3247

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 8555

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OPEC

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF OPEC TERRORISTS

REF: A) JIDDA 8432; B) STATE 304486

SUMMARY: WHILE WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE TERRORIST INCIDENT AIMED AT THE OPEC OIL MINISTERS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE SAG, IT APPEARS THAT THE REACTION TO THE HANDLING OF THE MATTER BY ALGERIA IS MIXED; ADMIRATION FOR THE COURAGE OF MININDUSTRY AND ENERGY ABDESSALEM AND CONERN THAT RELEASE OF THE TERRORISTS WILL MAKE EVERY PRIMINENT TRAVELING SAUDI A TARGET. OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED HAVE UNIVERSALLY CONDEMNED THE INCIDENT AND MOST HAVE SPOKEN OF THE NEED FOR FIRM ACTION IN SUCH CASES. THE SAG HAS MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE RELEASE OF THE TERRORISTS AND PROBABLY WILL NOT. THE SAG WOULD PROBABLY PREFER THAT WE ALSO SAY NOTHING PUBLICLY BUT IT WILL NOT HARM OUR RELATIONS IF WE DO. WE RECOMMEND THAT ANY STATEMENT WE DO MAKE BE GENERAL AND NOT SINGLE OUT OUR FRIENDS YAMANI AND AMOUZEGAR. END SUMMARY.

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1. PRESENCE OF COURT IN JORDAN AND SYRIA WHEN OPEC HOSTAGES WERE RELEASED, AND COURT SHIFT TO RIYADH UPON KING KHALID'S RETURN TO JIDDA HAS HINDERED HIGH-LEVEL CONTACT WITH SAG OVER TERRORISM ISSUE. CHARGE IS TO SEE FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD IN RIYADH JAN 3 AND AT THAT TIME WILL RAISE THIS AND OTHER SUBJECTS. THERE HAS BEEN NO STATEMENT FROM THE SAG ABOUT TERRORISTS' RELEASE.

2. THE REACTION OF THE SAG TO ALGIER'S HANDLING OF THE OPEC MINISTERS' KIDNAPPERS, HOWEVER, SEEMS MIXED. THE DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION, ABDAAH MAHDI INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT WAS MOST GRATEFUL FOR THE COURAGE AND THE SPIRIT OF FRATERNAL ARAB SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATED BY ALGIER'S INDUSTRY AND ENERGY MINISTER ABDESSALEM IN REFUSING TO SEPARATE HIMSELF FROM THE OTHER HOSTAGES WHEN THE CHANCE WAS OFFERED. MAHDI SAID IF THE KIDNAPPERS HAD SUCCEEDED IN BEGINNING TO PEEL OFF THEIR CAPTIVES ONE BY ONE, THE OUTLOOK WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY DARK FOR AHMED ZAKI YAMANI AND IRANIAN MININTERIOR AMOUZEGAR.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND WE HAVE VARIOUS INDICATIONS THE SAG IS NOT PLEASED WITH THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT DECISION NOT TO PROSECUTE AND PUNISH THE KIDNAPPERS. A FORMER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE TOLD CHARGE THAT HIGH-RANKING SAUDIS WHEN TRAVELING ALONE MIGHT HENCEFORTH REGARD THEMSELVES AS MARKED MEN TO ANY OF THE INCREASINGLY NUMEROUS, RADICAL, AND UNDISCIPLINED LEFTIST FACTIONS ABOUT THE WORLD.

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF WESTERN AFFAIRS TOLD US THAT HAD THE TERRORISTS FALLEN INTO SAUDI ARABIAN HANDS THE WORLD WOULD HAVE GOTTEN A LESSON IN HOW TO HANDLE SUCH PEOPLE: THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED BEFORE ANY SYMPATHIZERS HAD A CHANCE TO URGE LENIENCY. (WHILE THE SENTIMENTS ARE DOUBTLESS SINCERE WE FEAR THIS IS LARGELY BRAVADO; THE SAG HAD INSTRUCTED THAT THE TERRORISTS NOT BE GIVEN PERMISSION TO LAND. IF THEY HAD IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE EQUIVOCATED.)
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THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF ARAB AFFAIRS, AFTER DEPLORING THE INCIDENT, SAID THAT THIS KIND OF THING WOULD CONTINUE UNTIL TERRORISTS KNEW THAT THEY COULD NOT AVOID PUNISHMENT. SAUDI ARABIA HAD ALREADY LEARNED THIS LESSON FROM INCIDENTS IN KHARTOUM, PARIS AND BEIRUT.

5. GOVERNOR OF SAUDI ARABIAN MONETARY AGENCY,

SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ QURAISHI, TOLD CHARGE DEC 30 THAT SAG WAS OF COURSE PROFOUNDLY RELEIVED THAT MINISTER YAMANI HAD BEEN RELEASED UNSCATHED. QURAISHI ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SAUDI OFFICIALS BELIEVED ALGERIANS HAD ERRED IN FAILING TO PUNISH THE KIDNAPPERS. HE SAID THAT IN EXCHANGE FOR THE KIDNAPPERS' PROMISE TO RELEASE ALL OF THE HOSTAGES UNHARMED, ALGERIANS HAD IN TURN PROMISED NOT TO PROSECUTE NOR EXTRADITE THE KIDNAPPERS FOR THEIR CRIME. QURAISHI BELIVED THAT WHILE NEGOTIATING WITH TERRORISTS ONE SHOULD PROMISE ANYTHING, BUT UPON LAYING ONE'S HANDS ON THEM ONE SHOULD NEVER BE BOUND BY SUCH PROMISES. TO DO SO ONLY GAVE A RESPECTABLE--EVEN SOVEREIGN--CHARACTER TO THE GANG'S ACTIVITY. QURAISHI ALSO SAID THE SAG WAS CONCERNED AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO SAUDI OFFICIALS TRAVELING OR RESIDING OVERSEAS, AND THAT THE NEXT GROUP OF TERRORISTS TO SEIZE REPRESENTATIVES OF A MODERATE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRY MIGHT NOT BE SATISFIED WITH A PROPAGANDA VICTORY. RATHER, THEIR DEMANDS MIGHT INCLUDE SOME POLITICAL OR ECONOMICAL CONCESSION, AND THE RESULTING SITUATION COULD PLACE THE LIFE OF THE HOSTAGES IN GREATER JEOPARDY. QURAISHI IS A GOODFRIEND OF AHMED ZAKI YAMANI, AND HE SAID THAT SHAIKH ZAKI'S NERVES WERE SEVERELY SHAKEN BY THE INCIDENT.

6. COMMENT: WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT ACTION SAG HAS TAKEN OR WILL TAKE WITH GOA ON TREATMENT OF TERRORISTS. IT HAS NOT RACTED PUBLICLY AND FORMALLY TO THE ALGERIAN RELEASE OF THE OPEC TERRORISTS. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, IF THE SAUDIS REMAIN PUBLICLY SILENT THEY WOULD PREFER THAT WE NOT MAKE A STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT. BUT IF WE DID, WE DO NOT BELIEVE OUR ACTION WOULD HAVE MUCH CONFIDENTIAL

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OF AN EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SAG. FROM OUR LOCAL STANDPOINT, ANY U.S. STATEMENT ON THE INCIDENT SHOULD BE AS INCLUSIVE AS POSSIBLE AND DWELL ON THE DANGER TO WHICH A WHOLE GROUP OF PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL FIGURES WAS SUBJECTED AND NOT SINGLE OUT JUST OUR FRIENDS YAMANI AND AMOUZEGAR. HORAN

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